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Reversing the Curse of Corruption in Nigeria: Lessons from Rawls' Ethical Philosophy

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Abstract

Corruption has become a pervasive and debilitating issue in modern Nigerian society, undermining economic development, eroding trust in institutions, and perpetuating social inequality. Despite numerous attempts to combat corruption, Nigeria continues to grapple with this seemingly intractable problem. This article seeks to offer a novel perspective on addressing corruption in Nigeria by engaging with the ethical philosophy of John Rawls. Through a conceptual, critical, and analytical examination of Rawls' principles of justice and the social contract, this study argues that a preventative approach to corruption, grounded in a moral and political alignment of human conduct, is essential for reversing the curse of corruption in Nigeria. By applying Rawls' prescriptions for an ideal society, including the importance of codes of ethics and the alignment of morality and politics, this article contends that Nigerians must fundamentally alter their behaviour and adhere to the principles of the social contract to govern human relations. This study contributes to the on-going discourse on corruption in Nigeria by providing a philosophical framework for understanding the problem and offering a pragmatic solution to this national disgrace. Ultimately, this article argues that a Rawlsian approach to corruption holds the key to unlocking sustainable development and a more just society in Nigeria.

Keywords: Corruption, Nigeria, John Rawls, ethical philosophy, morality and politics, sustainable development

Introduction

Nigeria is undoubtedly rich in natural resources as well as people. Nevertheless, corruption and unscrupulous practices, together with the fallout on the nation's ambition for progress, are somewhat to blame for the poverty that exists there. The threat of corruption is encapsulated by Adefarasin (2009), who claims that "the phenomenon of corruption seems to be the unofficial ideology, the universal language spoken and understood in all parts of Nigeria." Corruption is one of the main issues Nigeria is now experiencing. In Nigeria, corruption is still a fatal epidemic today. The disintegration of the infrastructure, the economy, the health and education systems, and other facets of daily life has all been caused by corruption. It still affects a lot of Nigerians. The Nigerian Christian Church can not assert itself free of it. In what aspects of Nigerian society does corruption not exist? Is it within our government's executive branch, the legislative branch, which includes the Senate, House of Representatives, State Assemblies, Local Governments, Judiciary branch, which includes courts, uniformed establishment, which includes the military, police, immigration and customs services, prisons, civil and administrative services, education and health sectors, and private sector? If we don't want to fool ourselves, the entire country is dealing with issues that need to be resolved right away. The decision to end corruption in Nigeria at all costs must be made by the church and all Nigerians (Emenyeonu, 2007).



Shehu (2006) asserts that instances of bribery and extortion, as well as givers and takers who are unwilling to admit the existence of corruption, are all part of the harmful character of corruption. Moreover, we still don't fully understand the extent of its effects due to its intricacy. If corruption is a complex phenomenon, then a true understanding of its effects needs to focus not only on the persons involved but also on the specific conditions that surround it. It is believed that large-scale or small-scale corruption is more common in societies where laws are not strictly enforced.

Moreover, corruption might be either passive or active. It has its contextual implications regardless of the categorization. In a related development, (Desta 2006) holds the opinion that corruption, as experienced by the majority of Africans, is a real problem that includes overt theft, embezzlement of public funds or other misappropriation of state property, nepotism and the granting of favors to personal acquaintances, as well as the abuse of public authority to demand benefits and payments.

Exploiting one's political or official position for personal gain or profit is unlawful, unethical, and unapproved, and this is known as political corruption. Public affairs are meant to be implied by the word "political" in political corruption. The state is a human society with structured public institutions. The term pertains to the official goods, affairs, fortunes, agencies, resources, and institutions of the state. To pursue personal or private benefit, a person in an official position may commit acts of corruption against the state or its agencies. This is known as political corruption. Thus, the term "political" refers to something official, public (as opposed to private), or governmental. This indicates that political corruption will not be defined as an act of corruption against a private or non-governmental organization. In order to do this, the study intends to investigate John Rawls' Ethical Philosophy as a Solution to Endless Corruption in Contemporary Nigerian Society. The study will try to apply this theory to the problem as it is specific to Nigeria and offer solutions as a result.

Rawls' Theory of Justice: An Overview

What Rawls refers to as the circumstances of justice serve as the foundation for his ethical philosophy. According to Rawls, the question of justice usually comes up when these conditions are met. According to Rawls, there are two categories of circumstances of justice: objective circumstances and subjective circumstances. According to Rawls, these situations are what make cooperation both possible and essential in our daily lives. (1) Objective Circumstances of Justice: as per Rawls, they consist of three components: a common geographical area, a reasonable shortage of resources, and the ability to assist or injure. (2) Subjective Circumstances of Justice: consists of two components: disagreement and mutual disinterest among persons. According to Rawls, this is a cooperative endeavor for mutual benefit. According to Garcia (2005:14-15), justice is the guiding principle that determines how the venture's fruits are distributed. Therefore, we can replace "morality" with "justice" and "morally" with "justly" in Rawls' theory.

In essence, Rawls's theory consists of two principles that define an egalitarian conception of justice and the original position, a procedure for evaluating and defending potential justice principles to identify his principle as the only one that makes the most sense. The vision is contentious in that it advocates a certain form of equality and gives some liberties special emphasis, but it is liberal in that it seeks to unite the principles of liberty and equality in a unified paradigm.

The first of Rawls's principles is known as the Equal Liberty Principle, and the second is sometimes separated into two sections: Fair Equality Protected by the First Principles. These include the following: political liberty, which includes the freedom to vote, hold public office, and to engage in free speech and assembly; liberty of conscience and freedom of thought; freedom of the person, which includes the freedom from physical assault and dismemberment (including psychological oppression); the right to possess personal property; and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the notion of the rule of law (Rawls, 1999:53).

Protecting civil liberties of the kind that could very well become ingrained in a political constitution is the goal. Since society is egalitarian and every individual has an equal right to the greatest extent of liberties that are compatible with similar liberties for all, Rawls contends that the Principle of Equal Liberty is one of the principles that self-interested rational persons behind the curtain of ignorance would choose to structure society around. The second principle, the Principle of Equal Opportunity, states that all candidates shall be able to apply for employment and benefits under reasonable competition. "Fair equality of opportunity may be contrasted with formal equality of opportunity of career open to talent," according to Garcia (2005:14).

A position is seen to comply with the principle when it is available to all interested parties, regardless of their background or qualifications for the role in question. Examples of such roles include those in universalities, desired employment, and entrepreneurial chances that require access to finance. When advantages are distributed in any way other than according to the candidates' qualifications, formal equality of opportunity is broken. In a society where only children from wealthy families can acquire the abilities and other characteristics that make them viable candidates, this standard might be satisfied. Institutions must be set up to ensure that everyone with the same innate skills and aspirations has an equal chance of competing successfully for positions that grant above-average shares of primary social goods. This is necessary for fair equality of opportunity. In a way, a society that upholds fair equality of opportunity is the epitome of a meritocracy.

The Difference Principle indicates social and economic disparities should be set up to maximize the advantages for the least privileged individual. This idea makes sure that discrimination based on petty standards doesn't prevent people from obtaining privileged positions. The additional requirement that the first principle has strict lexical precedence over the second enhances the protection afforded to fundamental liberties. This indicates that one cannot exchange basic liberties for

benefits under another justice principle, nor can one accept a lesser degree of civil liberty when doing so would benefit the most disadvantaged members of society more in terms of fair equality of opportunity or other goods. Individuals who are "free and rational person could choose or accept as a fair basis for social cooperation," according to Rawls (1971:11), must make this decision in an "initial situation." Furthermore, the non-discrimination concept of fair equality of opportunity has strict linguistic precedence over the principle of difference.

This idea is applicable only when economic growth creates an environment that allows people to exercise their fundamental rights in an effective manner, not at all in the past. For Rawls, there are always going to be disparities between the members of any given social structure. Variations in social, political, economic, and natural status are among these disparities. Consequently, by positing an "original position" in which people gather and come to a consensual decision to accept a set of rules to govern their social activities, one might ascertain the morality (or justice) principle that Rawls believes should guide human relations in an ideal society.

Like Kant, Rawls views the original position as a hypothetical one in which people are free to select just principles without bias since they are living under the "veil of ignorance," not knowing who they are or where they fit into society. As humans are only allowed to possess a general understanding of "life and society," Rawls explains, each person must make a "rationally prudential choice" regarding the type of social institution they will join. In the absence of any particular self-knowledge, man is compelled to embrace a global perspective that is intimately linked to ethical reasoning. The original position argument, according to Arneson (2007), exemplified a fair procedural standard of justification, meaning that what is right is what persons who adhere to an ideal procedure would accept as right. To establish the "original position," Rawls presents a theoretical "veil of ignorance."

A particular conception of justice can be chosen by consensus thanks to the veil of ignorance. No one knows, first of all, where they fit into society, their class, their position, or their social status. Nor do they know how their natural abilities and endowments, such as intelligence and strength, will be distributed. Nobody also understands his idea of what is good, his logical life plans in detail, or even the unique aspects of his personality, such as his pessimism, risk aversion, or liability (Rawls, 1971). For Rawls, the initial agreement's main goal was to uphold the ideals of justice for society's fundamental good. The decision that reasonable men would make in this hypothetical situation of equal liberty determines the principles of justice. These are the principles that free and rational persons concerned with furthering their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their association. (Rawls, 1971).

Based on this claim, Rawls's hypothetical scenario allows people to choose according to a widely accepted framework that stipulates that (a) Every individual has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme for all; and (b) Only those political liberties, and only those liberties, are to be guaranteed their value in this scheme. (c) Social and economic disparities must meet two requirements: first, they must be linked to

jobs and positions that are accessible to everyone under fair equality of opportunity; second, they must be primarily beneficial to the least advantaged members of society.

In Rawls' theory, the possession of multipurpose goods, also referred to as primary social goods, serves as a proxy for an individual's advantages. According to Rawls, these goods are those that, given everything else they desire, a person would reasonably want more of rather than less of. According to Rawls (1996), 106 and 178, primary goods are those that any rational person would aspire to have and prioritize to develop and exercise two moral powers: the ability to adopt and pursue a conception of the good and the ability to cooperate with others on fair terms.

The fundamental rights and liberties protected by the first part of the second principle's fair equality of opportunity, freedom of movement, free choice of occupation, income, and wealth, and the social foundations of self-respect are considered to be the primary social goods (Rawls 1996:180). Any attempt to share the "primary goods" will inevitably lead to conflict, according to Rawls, who also asserts that justice is essentially at issue. According to Rawls (1971: 126), "of the "basic goods" with which justice is concerned, and which all persons' desire alike, each prefer a larger to a lesser share." The potential for violation culminates in a scenario where individuals within the community start modifying the governing principles to further their own agenda. Determining what behaviors are ethically right or immoral is a question raised by this circumstance. Rawls soon responds, saying that "stabilizing forces should exist that prevent further violations when infractions occur" (1971: 12). Establishing such sublimating forces aids in the fight against looming moral crises in society. In support of his claims, Rawls invokes the idea of the "maximum rule" as a framework for regulating the decision-making process and guarding against potential infractions. By ranking each option according to its worst possible outcome and then selecting the one whose worst outcome is better for him than the worst outcome of the others, the "maximum rule" suggests that it makes sense for a person who has to decide in a situation where he is unsure of the personal consequences of choosing any alternative.

Based on Rawls, a society is made up of individuals who come together to form it. In essence, a well-ordered society is one in which all members accept the same moral and ethical principles and are aware that these principles are generally satisfied by the fundamental social institutions. According to Rawls, the fundamental framework of society – how important institutions like the family, the political system, and the economic system interact to influence people's opportunities in life – is what matters most when discussing justice. Consequently, the fundamental framework of society is meant to be governed by the ideals of justice. Additionally, social justice imposes ancillary duties on individuals: if there are just institutions, they should follow their rules; if not, they should work toward the creation of just institutions, to the extent that such efforts are likely to be successful and do not place an undue amount of risk on the striving individual. This suggests that any set of values that are accepted by everyone must also be fair to everyone else because if they weren't fair to anyone, they wouldn't be accepted

by everyone. Based on this, justice, according to Rawls, is fairness. Further discussion of Rawls' contention that what is fair to one is also acceptable to all is appropriate. The reasoning is that it is false both synthetically and analytically. Since "what is fair is equally acceptable" is not a statement in which the predicate is contained in the subject, it is not analytically true. Furthermore, it is not synthetically accurate in the sense that experience does not always support it. The moral justness of a social norm or arrangement does not always translate into acceptance by those who would like to see it reversed or undermined. For instance, a fair system of contractual rules governing the working relationship between an employer and his employees may exist, but the employer may find it unacceptable to deal with the employees under the rules of the fair system of contractual rules. Norton (1975:50), in his discussion of Rawls, states that morality (or justice) is based on the right principle, which is selected by the individual who expects to thereafter participate in ongoing social cooperation. The proper principles are those that delineate fundamental rights and obligations and establish how social benefits are distributed. It is important to highlight Rawls's defense of the adoption of his theory of justice at this stage. In his first argument, Rawls makes two points: first, he argues that if these principles are applied in the current context, they will seem reasonable since they suggest policies and results for persons that are consistent with our thoughtful assessment of these issues. Another line of reasoning is a notion to improve the social contract custom. Justice, according to Rawls's original conception, is defined as what people would agree to when selecting rules that would ideally regulate the fundamental framework of society.

John Rawls' Theory of Justice: A Critique

His major work, *A Theory of Justice*, published in 1971 spurred insightful reflections in ethics and political theory. It is important to discuss only the basics of this theory of justice since a full discussion is not possible within the present intellectual enterprise. Rawls aimed to construct a conception of justice that would replace utilitarianism. Positing that utilitarianism is a threat to society Rawls stresses that:

A theory, however elegant or economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue, likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. For this reason, justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantage enjoyed by many... Being the first virtues of human activities, truth and justice are uncompromising (Rawls, 1971:10).

Rawls therefore aligns his moral and political philosophy with social contract theorists like Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. He began by establishing that society exists in terms of a social contract and that justice is the foremost Virtue of any social institution. As a student of Kant, Rawls explicitly presented his project as a Kantian one by identifying certain moral principles that are to be universally

adopted if justice must flourish. Although, the fact that Rawls's work has any Kantian interpretation has been contested; this shall be discussed in later parts of this chapter. Frazer (2007) describes Rawls's work as enriched by the fact that it stands between the rationalist and sentimentalist enlightenments, drawing philosophical resources from both. While David Hume and Jean Jacques Rousseau represent the sentimentalist enlightenment Immanuel Kant represents the rationalist enlightenment. Frazer explained further that:

In order to clarify Rawls's debt to the sentimentalist as well as the rationalist Enlightenment, it is helpful to understand their competing theories of moral and political reflection as combining two separate elements. To use Hume's most famous distinction, they offer both a theory of what "is" and a theory of what "ought to be" -a descriptive moral psychology that explains what goes on when we engage in moral and political reflection and a theory of normativity that explains why the standard we reach through such reflection must be treated as authoritative. While sentimentalism describes reflection as a matter of feeling and imagination as well as cognition, rationalism describes reflection as a matter of rational cognition alone. While sentimentalism understands normativity as stemming from the reflective stability of a mind able to bear its own holistic survey, rationalism sees normativity as authoritative legislation by the faculty of reason here identified with our true, free self (Frazer 2007:4).

Interpretation and Critiques of Rawls' Theory of Justice

Rawls' Theory of justice has been subjected to various interpretations and critiques by several thinkers. Here we shall consider the basic interpretation and critiques. These include; the Feminist interpretation and critique, the Liberal interpretation and critique, the Marxist interpretation and critique, as well as the Egalitarian critique of the principles of social justice.

The Feminist Interpretation and Critique

Susan Moller Okin is an important figure in the display of a variety of liberal feminism that is significantly based on the thought of John Rawls. Her project involves an attempt to amend and extend Rawlsian thought to challenge the gender-structured character of modern society, in particular by extending principles of justice to apply to relations between men and women in the family. For Okin, a suitably amended Rawlsian position can be an effective tool to defend liberal feminism. The feminist schools uphold the idea that for there to be justice, in societies there generally required that there be justice in the family. This claim is the starting point of Okin's presentation of a distinctive contribution to feminism and literature on justice. She contends that justice requires society to embrace principles and develop policies that would enable a "genderless family" to thrive. In this instance, the responsibilities and burdens of parenting and married life would be shared equally between female and male members of the family. This for Okin is an egalitarian distribution of responsibilities that will help overcome the relations of

dominance and submission that characterize contemporary married relations between men and women. The achievement of this genderless family is what Okin calls the “humanist conception of Justice”.

On the other hand, Rawls’ principles of justice have also witnessed significant criticism from feminists. Identifying the merit of the original position as that which “forces one to question and consider traditions, customs, and institution from all point of view, and ensure that the principles of justice will be acceptable to everyone, regardless of what position he ends up in”, Okin (1989:101) agrees with Rawls that the original position can ensure respect for pluralism. She argues that principles of justice will be that which can be acceptable to everyone once the veil of ignorance is lifted. However, she proceeds from the feminist standpoint to state that; making unanimity criteria among the parties rests on the assumption that they all have similar motivations, psychologies, and experiences of moral development and moral development of women, which gives them varying attitudes to justice.

The coherence of Rawls’ original position, with its unanimity of representative human beings...is placed in doubt if the kinds of human beings we become in society differ not only concerning interest, superficial opinions, prejudices, and points of view that we can discard to formulate principles of justice, but also in their basic psychologies, conception of the self about others, and experiences of moral development (Okin, 1989:106). This critique, which Okin plays a main role in developing focuses on how political thought, including contemporary political thought, has placed the traditional family beyond the regulative domain of theories of justice. Feminists argue that the effect has been to ignore how the institution of the family interferes with the realization of the standard of justice those theories purport to uphold, by allowing women to be placed in positions of vulnerability and submission. As a response to this situation, many feminists have argued that to create a social environment that will properly support the values of a just society for all its members, we must extend standards of justice to apply to the relations between adult members of the family. Nussbaum (2000), in appreciation of Rawls’ Theory of justice, stresses that Rawls’ theory ensures that a moral conclusion can be reached without abandoning the prudential standpoint and positing a moral outlook merely by pursuing one’s own prudential reasoning under certain procedural bargaining and knowledge constraints. For Nussbaum the liberties mentioned in Rawls’s Principle of Equal Liberty, if they are to be meaningful at all, are capabilities or substantial freedoms, real opportunities based on natural and developed potentialities supported by all members of the society. Likewise, the concern of the different principles to raise those who are least advantaged must be clarified in light of substantial freedom, which requires a commitment by citizens and governments to a threshold of real opportunities below which no human being should fall if she can rise above it.

Liberal Critique of Rawls' Theory of Justice

In general terms, Liberalism focuses on issues about the nature of society and the nature of the self. It is usually associated with the individualist analyses of society.

The last few decades have witnessed a renewed interest in collectivist analyses of liberal society under the term 'collectivism to support 'communitarian. Sandel's (1982) famous criticism of Rawls posits that liberalism was necessarily premised on an abstract conception of individual selves as pure choosers, whose commitments, values, and concerns are possessions of the self but never constitute the self. On the other hand, the "liberal-communitarian" debate ultimately involved wide-ranging moral, political, and sociological disputes about the nature of communities and the rights and responsibilities of their members; the heart of the debate was about the nature of liberal selves. In Sandel's view (1982), the flaw at the heart of Rawls's liberalism was its implausibly abstract theory of the self, for, the pure autonomous chooser and only an adoption of the motion of the person can make Rawls's theory of justice meaningful. Rawls assumes that it makes sense to identify individuals with a pure capacity for choice and that such pure choosers might reject any or all of their attachments and values and yet retain their identity. Sandel argues that what issues at one end in a theory of Justice must issue at the other in a theory of the person, or more precisely, a theory of the moral subject.

Marxist Critique of Rawls' Theory of Justice

From the Marxist perspective, Isham (2010) presents three major criticisms of Rawls's principles of justice; first that justice conceptualization is wholly ideological and seeks to legitimate social inequalities. By the claim that conceptions of justice are ideological, a Marxist can mean that conceptions of justice are based on ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class or ideas that help to authenticate a dominant political power. For a Marxist, the particular social class in question would be the capitalist class, the bourgeoisie, or the owners of the means of production, however, a careful look at Rawls's principle of justice favours the proletariat above the bourgeoisie, their basis of an ideological argument can be traced to their interest in extolling production above distribution (a tendency towards historical materialism). The claim is that Rawls neglects a fundamental inequality between capitalists and workers. A response to this is that Rawls' (2001) theory implies that the worker controls the means of production. A Rawlsian could also claim that, if there is a fundamental inequality (in decision-making or income) between capitalist and worker, then the contracting parties in the original position behind the veil of ignorance would not choose a society in which the capitalist-worker relationship existed. The inequality between capitalists and workers is one of authority, as well as wealth. For Rawls, both wealth and authority are subject to different principles, as "the second (principle of justice) holds that social and economic inequalities, for example, inequalities of wealth and authority, are just only if they result in the compensating benefits for everyone, and in particular for the least advantaged members of society" (1971:14-15).

Thirdly, there is the question of the usefulness or otherwise of justice talk. Marx is seen by some to be claiming that appeals to justice for social transformation are historically ineffective; rather, class interest should be the priority. This idea can be traced to Marx's belief that ethical claims and well-formed arguments are of little or no worth to the ruling class. A Rawlsian could grant the class interest argument,

and ask what are ways in which classes come together to change their historical circumstances. Appeals to justice and appeals to ethics have and will continue to play or role in bringing people together to struggle for social change. And one may add that these appeals, while very well may do nothing on their own are instrumental in solidifying a collective will and inspiring action.

Egalitarian Critique of Rawls' Theory of Justice

The egalitarian principle purports that all people are in principle, equal and should enjoy equal social, political, and economic rights and opportunities. Rawls settled on the difference principle or the democratic interpretation of equality that he believes is a strongly egalitarian conception in the sense that unless there is a distribution that makes both persons better off, an equal distribution is to be preferred. Although Nozick agrees with Rawls that utilitarianism is not a sufficient principle for morality, Nozick's "Entitlement Theory" (1974) faults the processes by which Rawls' rule of justice is arrived at with a major attack pointing at economic and political issues in Rawls's principle of justice. The underlying argument is that Rawls' principles can only generate end-result principles as against process principles. In addition, critics like Amartya Sen, Leonard Choptiany, and Olivier Johnson among others posit that the logical arguments of Rawls cannot be truly binding as principles of justice, because his view of justice is not purely normative. Sen (2008) appreciates the starting point of Rawls's theory of justice from the demand for fairness to arrive at his principles of justice and the central point of concentration, which is the mainstream in theories of justice; the idea of mutual obligations for social cooperation because of joint benefits. However, he identifies some shortcomings of Rawls's theory of justice. Rawls' theory of justice is accused of basically speculating about the nature and demands of the perfectly just society, rather than concentrating on how to make society more just. In Sen's Words, "this" concentration gives the theory of justice a transcendental form". Describing Rawls' method as "transcendental institutionalism", Sen argues that any viable theory of justice must begin by recognizing the existence of frequent conflict in principles. Sen contends that by comparing available alternatives in conflicting situations, justice is possible without necessarily requiring a perfect theory of justice which Rawls sought to achieve. He further states that:

The transcendental approach to justice is not new (it can be traced at least to the writings of Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century), but recent contributions have done much to consolidate the reliance on this approach. In his investigation of "justice as fairness," Rawls explores in depth the nature of an entirely Just society seen in the perspective of fairness. Even those political philosophers who have taken a different approach to the demands of justice from Rawls, for example Robert Nozick (who differs quite radically on the primacy of entitlements and historically founded rights) or Thomas Nagel (whose differences from Rawls are more subtle), tend to accept the transcendental

approach to be the only one that can take us towards an understanding of the nature of justice (Sen, 2008:337-338).

This is a strong criticism against Rawls' "maxim in principle". In his *Egalitarian Critique of Rawls*, Cohen (1992) says that, for socialist egalitarians, equality is not a fundamental value but a means to make the badly off better off. Therefore, if an inequality is needed to make the badly off better off, it is mandated. In this wise, socialist egalitarians do not believe in strict equality but in Rawls's difference principle, which states that social and economic inequalities are to be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society. However, Cohen questions the application of the difference principle in defense of incentives to talented people, which Rawlsians think satisfies the principle.

Cohen's critique focused on two benchmarks of Rawls' conception of justice: one, principles of justice ought to be limited to the society's basic structure (how the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation (Rawls, 1971) Two, is the fulfillment of the basic liberty principle whereby the distribution of social good should be governed under the Difference Principle. Inequalities ought to be considered just if and only if they are necessary to improve the conditions of the worst off; if certain inequalities of wealth and organizational powers would make everyone better off (Rawls, 1971) it would be irrational not to accept them in favour of strict equality among people. In Cohen's view, there can be two different readings of the Difference Principle. He states:

I have been concerned with distinguishing between inequalities that are necessary, apart from human choice, to make the worst off better off, and inequalities that are necessary to that end only given what some people's intentions are. And this distinction, between, as one might say, intention-relative and intention-independent necessities, generates a question about how we are to take the word "necessary in John Rawls's difference principle. When he says that inequalities are Just if they are necessary to improve the position of the worst off, does he countenance only inequalities that are necessary (to achieve the stated end) apart from people's intentions, or also, and more liberally (in more than one sense of that term), inequalities such as those that are necessary when talented people lack a certain sort of commitment to equality and are set to act accordingly? (Cohen, 1992:311)

Cohen further explains that:

We confront here two readings of the difference principle: in its strict reading, it counts inequalities as necessary only when they are, strictly, necessary, necessary, that is, apart from people's chosen intentions. In its lax reading, it countenances intention-relative necessities as well. So, for example, if an inequality is needed to make the badly off better off but only given that talented producers operate as self-interested market maximizers, then that inequality is endorsed by the lax, but not by the strict, reading of the difference principle. (Cohen, 1992:311).

Cohen agrees with Rawls that the only inequalities that an egalitarian conception of justice can (and ought to) justify are those necessary to improve the lives of the worst off, but he thinks that Rawls' justification for this claim is ambiguous: such an ambiguity, Cohen further argues, can be solved by enlarging the scope of the principles of justice.

Morality and Politics

Ever since the dawn of intellectual thought, philosophers and politicians have debated whether politics and morality may be connected. Furthermore, the question of how to place those important concepts—such as right, good, virtue and vice, individual liberty, and the public interest—that are directly related to the discussion was intended to be covered. What matters most, though, is to what extent conventional moral demands and principles should guide politics. Two opposing viewpoints have been raised by this question.

Two extreme factions that are opposed to each other are the Aristotelian and Machiavellian schools of thought. Aristotle believed that the goal of moral virtue, which in the end would guarantee the happiness of the individual and the community at large, is the essence of all human endeavors, including political activity. The Machiavellian counsel given to "The Prince," on the other hand, claimed that neither human nature nor the mechanisms of politics required the elevation of the idea of morality in politics. He urged political leaders and aspirants to put politics beyond considering the possible influence of morals.

Politics and morality seem to be connected in some way, regardless of the position that one takes. Morality and politics both have a role in directing and controlling human behavior. While morality governs individual interactions and group exchanges, politics controls ties between groups, diverse socio-political institutions, and the state with the administration of state power at its core. The degree to which these two concepts might be linked differently indicates the distinction between private and public morality in social interactions. The message is that every individual is a moral agent with a private and public life. Morality and politics are entwined in every person. The important link between politics and morals becomes clear when someone moves from a private to a public life. It is useless to engage in political activity without defining individuals' roles within it. These people's actions define the scope and logic of politics. People's moral position essentially justifies the significance of political acts in their lives.

The differences between these two concepts were minimal, if present at all, in the early theories of politics and morality. Plato and Aristotle did not differentiate between these two concepts in their moral and political theories. Politics and personal morality are inextricably linked, according to Aristotle, as "ethics is at the same time politics" in their minds. According to Aristotle's teleological theory, the evaluation of human actions should be based on their outcomes. He values universal happiness beyond all else. In "The Leviathan," Thomas Hobbes compared Aristotle's theories. He claimed that people are self-interested. He demonstrated

this with his well-known concept of "war of all against all," which he claimed would occur in natural conditions, resulting in terrible strife among people. Hobbes argues that moral and just standards have no place in such a chaotic and conflict-filled environment (Gareth, 2001).

Early intuitionists including Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, and Samuel Clarke all disagreed with Hobbes' point of view. They believe morality is universal and objective (Clarke, 1996). Other theorists, such as Hume and Hutcheson, argued that moral judgment cannot be based exclusively on reason. They contended that, while reason can aid in the identification of moral behaviors, it cannot motivate us to perform them. A separate participant in this discussion, VassilProdanov, says that the "moralization of politics and politicization of morality" is to blame for our inability to establish the proper place of morality in politics. He argued that academics and theorists typically evaluate moral questions and political issues morally. This, he holds has contributed to a heightened discussion of how politics and morality interact. Politics cannot exist without morality; hence moral ideals must play an essential role in political activity. In other words, we should pay more attention to the moral consequences of our political decisions.

Corruption among the Political Leaders in Nigeria

A select few examples of the numerous instances of corruption perpetrated by Nigeria's political elite will suffice here. As previously stated, political leadership class corruption goes back to the colonial era. Since the establishment of the country's modern public service administration, corruption has been engrained in Nigerian politics (Ogbeidi, 2012).

Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Premier of the former Eastern Region, was investigated by the Foster-Sutton Tribunal of Inquiry in 1956 for his involvement in the affairs of the defunct African Continental Bank. According to the rule of conduct for public officials, when a government official holds a position of public trust, their private commercial interests must be abandoned (Ogbeidi, 2012). The 1994 Okigbo Panel Report on the Reorganisation and Reform of the Central Bank of Nigeria charged General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, a former military leader, the late General Sani Abacha, a former head of state, and the late Alhaji Abdulkadir Ahmed, a former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, with mismanaging an estimated \$12.4 billion oil windfall between 1988 and 1994 (Ogbeidi, 2012). According to a summary of the panel's findings supplied to the federal government, General Ibrahim Babangida's administration conspired with senior Central Bank of Nigeria officials to spend the entire amount on unproductive or dubious projects. Even after Babangida departed office in August 1993, his successors continued to pillage the nation's coffers using secret accounts and other methods.

Based on the Okigbo Report, General Babangida authorized the dedication of 65,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil in 1988 to fund high-priority projects such as Ajaokuta Iron & Steel, Itakpe Iron Mining, and Shiroro Hydroelectric Projects (Ogbeidi, 2012). The account was also meant to be used to accumulate reserves and

repurchase foreign debt. The amount was then increased to 105,000 barrels per day, followed by 150,000 barrels per day at the start of 1994.

Political parties in Nigeria have been the key channels for propagating corrupt habits in the country, including godfatherism and extortion. The Obasanjo group allegedly handed more than ₦1 billion in bribes to delegates at the ruling People Democratic Party (PDP)'s 2003 Special Convention, where the presidential flag bearer was chosen, on the ninth floor of the Nicon Hilton Hotel in Abuja (Adekeye, 2003).

It is difficult to discern legislators and executives at the federal, state, and municipal levels from the core tenets of their political parties; clearly, a corrupt ruling party will always generate a corrupt government. If corruption was common in the 1990s, it became legendary when democracy was restored in 1999 (Ogbeidi, 2012). President Olusegun Obasanjo had complete control over the petroleum ministry for the whole eight years of his presidency, during which high-level corruption was permitted without consequence (Ogbeidi, 2012). Premium Times reported exclusively in 2015 on the EFCC's invitation to Ali Modu Sheriff, the former governor of Borno State. Later, he was granted administrative bail. He was accused of misusing ₦300 billion that his government received from the Federation Account between 2003 and 2011; the anti-graft agency did not say why he was held, but sources told this site that was the reason. According to the Vanguard newspaper, the former governor was summoned to the EFCC's headquarters in Abuja in 2018 to answer allegations of abusing his position to the tune of \$200 million while pretending to enforce a bogus Boko Haram truce in a neighboring country in 2014 (Premium Times, 2022). Bukola Saraki, a former Senate President, is being investigated by the EFCC for possible financial crimes, according to Ibrahim Magu, a former acting chairman of the organization. The former governor of Kwara State, who served two terms, questioned the former EFCC chairman's motivation for initiating an investigation into his tenure in government, claiming it was a "witch-hunt" against him. The EFCC investigated Mr. Saraki for an alleged conspiracy, misuse of power, misappropriation of public funds, theft, and money laundering, as it did with his successor.

Philosophical Evaluation of Political Corruption

Absolutely no nation in the world is fully immune to the frightening grip of corruption, which is a global problem. However, what distinguishes one country from another on the perception of corruption index is the level of its prevalence on the one hand, and the people's honest, dedicated willingness to eradicate it on the other (Ochulor and Bassey, 2010). Corruption pervades many aspects of Nigerian society, including politics, civil society, and both public and private business and commerce. This widespread corruption implies the degradation of our ethical values and ideals. It highlights the futility of attempting to build a democratic community without a fundamental reliance on Christian ethical concepts such as justice, openness, charity, accountability, and service-oriented leadership. It exemplifies a leadership style that prioritizes the entrenched interests of a limited

few people over the general good, which philosophers frequently heralded as the foundation of political society (Uduigwomen, 2009). The purpose of ethics is to explain the moral explanations for our behavior, and the field of ethics embraces every action committed by a person as long as it is moral. The metaphysical underpinnings of man as a rational, free, and oriented to goodness, moral self-actualization, and perfection; as a being with an intrinsic teleological orientation toward God; as a moral agent with an innate moral principle.

An innate conscience open to divine and human positive laws, as well as a social person who can only be fully gratified in the context of ongoing social interaction, serve as the foundation for ethical ideals. Corruption in Nigeria stretches back before colonialism. According to a Colonial Government Report (CGR) from 1947, the Africans' past and views on public morals differ significantly from those of current Britons. The African government employee is concerned with his financial well-being (Okonkwo 2007). Before independence, government officials were accused of squandering funds for personal benefit (Storey, 1953).

Nigeria's wealth continues to be deteriorating over time, with little increase in the people's level of living. The First Republic, led by President Nnamdi Azikwe and Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, was marked by widespread corruption. Employees of the government plundered from the public coffers without consequences. Ministers and federal representatives brazenly flaunted their wealth. In truth, it appeared that the political leadership of the First Republic contained no morally decent men.

The political philosophy of the First Republic Nigerian upper class was based on using politics to further their financial goals, which included making money and living comfortably. The military gained popular support for the coup as a direct result of the First Republic's corruption, proving that Nigerians had long waited for such a wind of change to liberate them from the grip of the ruling elite. Despite the deaths of certain significant First Republic individuals, the country celebrated widely (Ogbeidi, 2012). Political leadership is defined as the governing elite in control of a political entity's business and financial activities. This is accomplished by setting and influencing policy priorities that affect the territory through a variety of organizations and decision-making mechanisms meant to promote the territory's orderly growth. It might also be called the human element in charge of a ruled territory's administrative systems.

This includes individuals who hold positions of power in the government as well as those who seek to do so through elections, coups, appointments, election fraud, conquest, inheritance, or other means (Ogbeidi, 2012). Broadly speaking, however, political leadership includes the entire political class with the power to affect the workings of government, even in the background, as well as the ruling elites who directly oversee a territory's affairs (Ogbeidi, 2012).

Whilst there is no universally agreed or comprehensive definition of corrupt activity, the bulk of definitions lay a strong emphasis on abusing public authority or positions for personal gain. In a simple dictionary definition, the phenomenon is

stated as "a weakening of virtue and moral ideals" (Lewis 2006). Corruption is defined by the World Bank and Transparency Worldwide (TI), a famous worldwide organization that monitors and combats corruption, as the misuse of public office for personal gain for the profit of the office holder or a third party.

Given these requirements, political corruption can be broadly characterized as unethical behavior that violates the laws of the political order (Heidenheimer and Johnston, 1993: 6). In essence, political corruption can be committed for personal and collective gain, as well as to retain power. These two forms of political corruption are commonly associated. In reality, both techniques are implicated in some of the most prominent political corruption cases (Ogbeidi, 2012). Politicians are regularly involved in misconduct, which includes theft and favoritism, as well as misbehavior involving both public and private participants, such as bribery, extortion, influence peddling, and fraud. Corruption jeopardizes democratic processes, sustainable development, good governance, and ethical corporate practices (Ogbeidi, 2012).

Conclusion

This study has shown that political corruption, defined as the misuse of one's political or official position for personal gain in violation of recognized moral or legal norms, is a common element of how governments work in all human civilizations. Corruption is a global problem, even though it is widely condemned. There is a need to seek an adequate explanation for this phenomenon. Most social scientists appear to believe that political corruption results from flaws and shortcomings in political and legal systems, as well as people's economic positions. To achieve all of these goals, it is recommended that all anti-corruption legislation in Nigeria be harmonised to make the fight against corruption more effective. To combat corruption, the government must raise the country's level of living. There is also a need to educate Nigerian citizens so that they can comprehend, practice, and protect their moral and ethical behaviours.

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